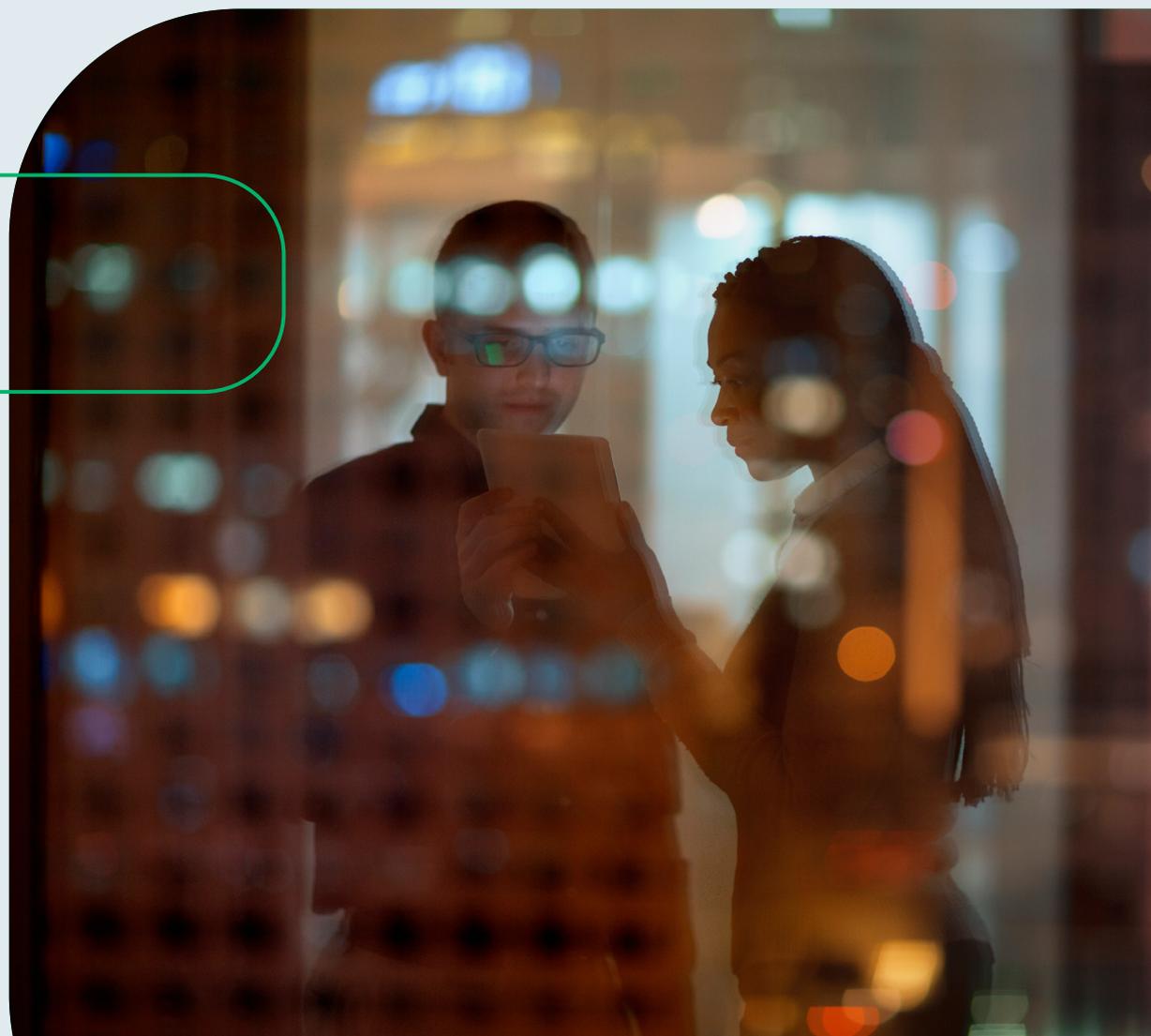


# A 5-step digital strategy guide for Australian SMEs

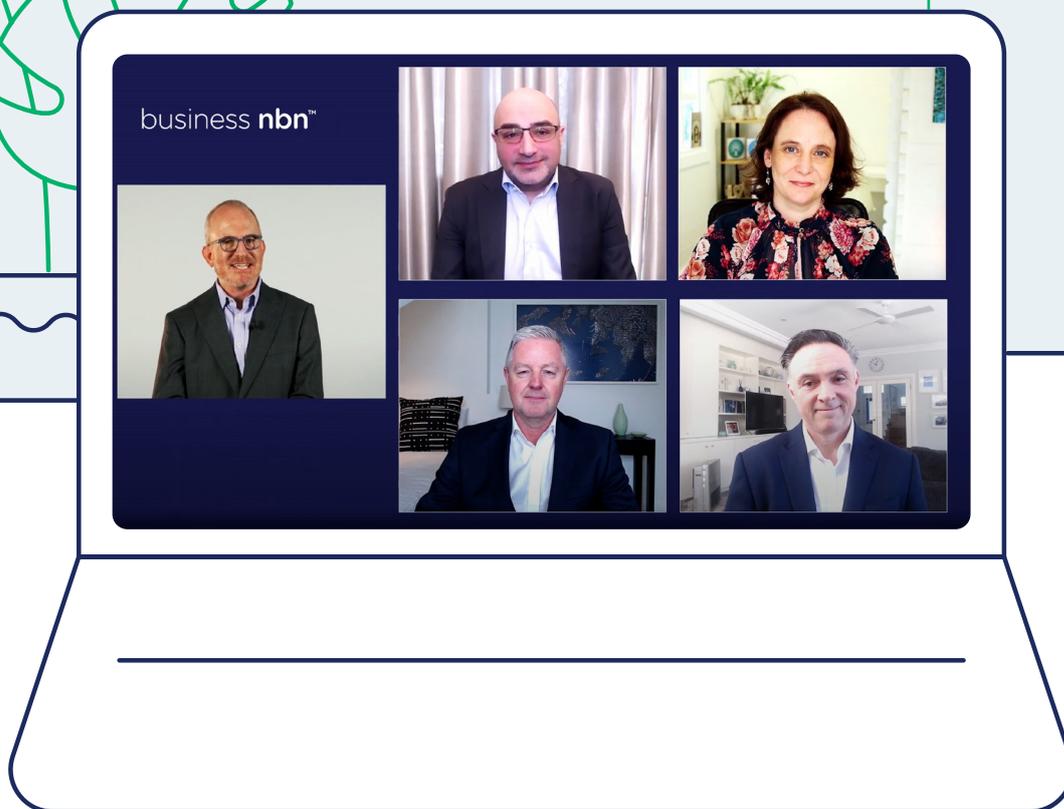
Learn how to build a digital strategy that sets your business up for the future.

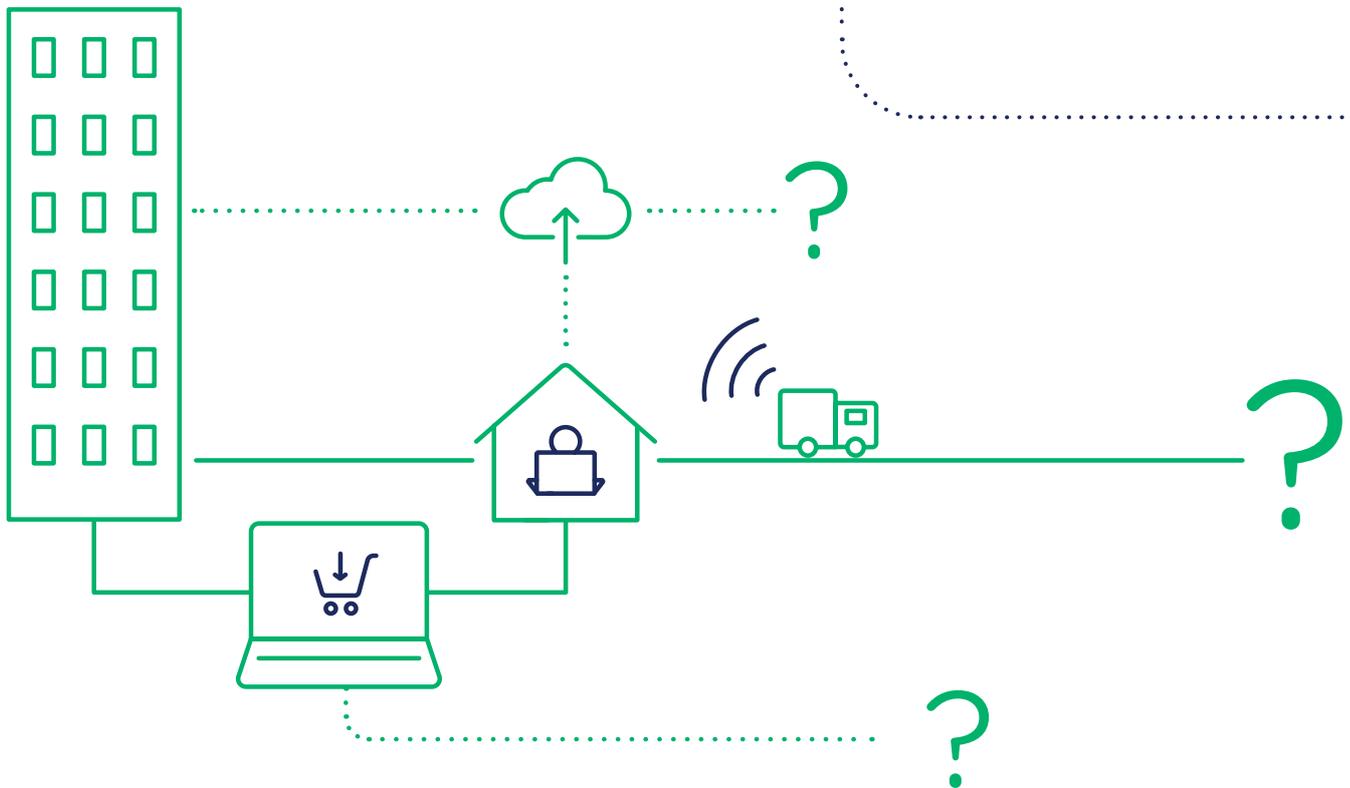


Australian SMEs responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic, remotely connecting to employees and customers and accelerating digital transformation efforts. This drove the take-up of high connectivity technologies such as video conferencing, e-commerce and cloud computing.

In a business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> webinar titled **Balancing digital acceleration: opportunities and challenges for SMBs**<sup>1</sup>, a panel of experts (some of which were commissioned by **nbn**)<sup>5</sup> looked at technology adoption by small businesses in Australia as a result of recent business disruption. This whitepaper builds on the webinar discussion to introduce a five-step guide to developing a digital strategy that unlocks the value of your existing technology investment, and builds a solid foundation for future growth.

Watch the webinar





## Moving fast, but in what direction?

**When big investments like adopting new technologies are made reactively, they may not help create a resilient and agile business for the future.**

The [Telsyte Australian Digital Workplace Study 2021](#)<sup>2</sup> conducted for business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> found that fewer than half - 44 per cent - of Australian small businesses had a digital strategy. COVID-19 created a situation where Australian small businesses were making rapid decisions to accelerate a digital transformation.

The push to upgrade systems in response to the pandemic has undoubtedly lifted the capability of many small businesses in Australia. But many may not have got a competitive advantage from the upgrades, because competitors have been busy doing the same thing.

A digital IT strategy can help leverage existing technology investments and align future investment. Putting in place a digital strategy that aligns with broader business goals, helps small to medium enterprises (SMEs) identify where they can develop a competitive advantage and highlight where systems may need to be upgraded to keep pace with competitors.



# A 5-step plan to create a robust digital strategy

1

## Establish the purpose of the digital strategy

Telsyte's study showed that for the majority of SMEs, technology adoption was piecemeal or siloed during the pandemic. Fast-paced technology adoption helped solve short-term problems, such as supporting a remote workforce, but the process may have been more streamlined and less costly with a digital strategy to identify the right technologies, network capability and any skills gaps in the business.

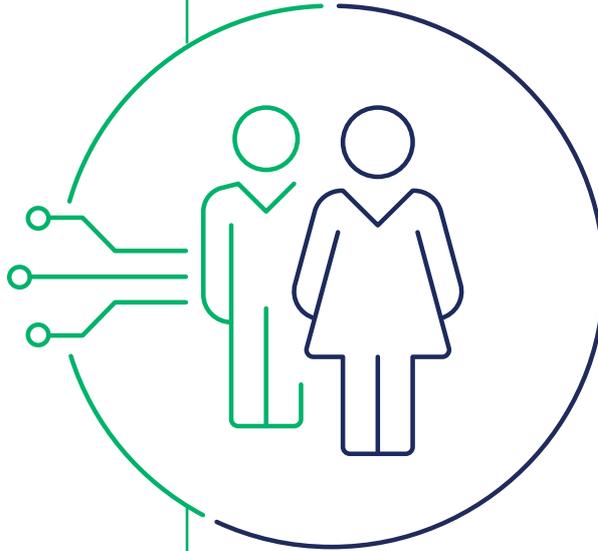


### Key takeaway:

A digital strategy aligned to business goals drives smarter technology investments to help create an agile and resilient business.

# 44%

**Less than half** of Australian SMEs have a digital strategy<sup>2</sup>.



Having a digital strategy in place means taking a more comprehensive approach, assessing all parts of a business' technology infrastructure, also known as its 'tech stack', and whether they are aligned to broader business strategy and goals.

To establish the purpose of a digital strategy, you have to first be clear on what the business itself wants to achieve, then look at how technology can help it get there.

With a digital strategy in place, businesses can be more agile and responsive, and more resilient, in the face of changing opportunities or threats.



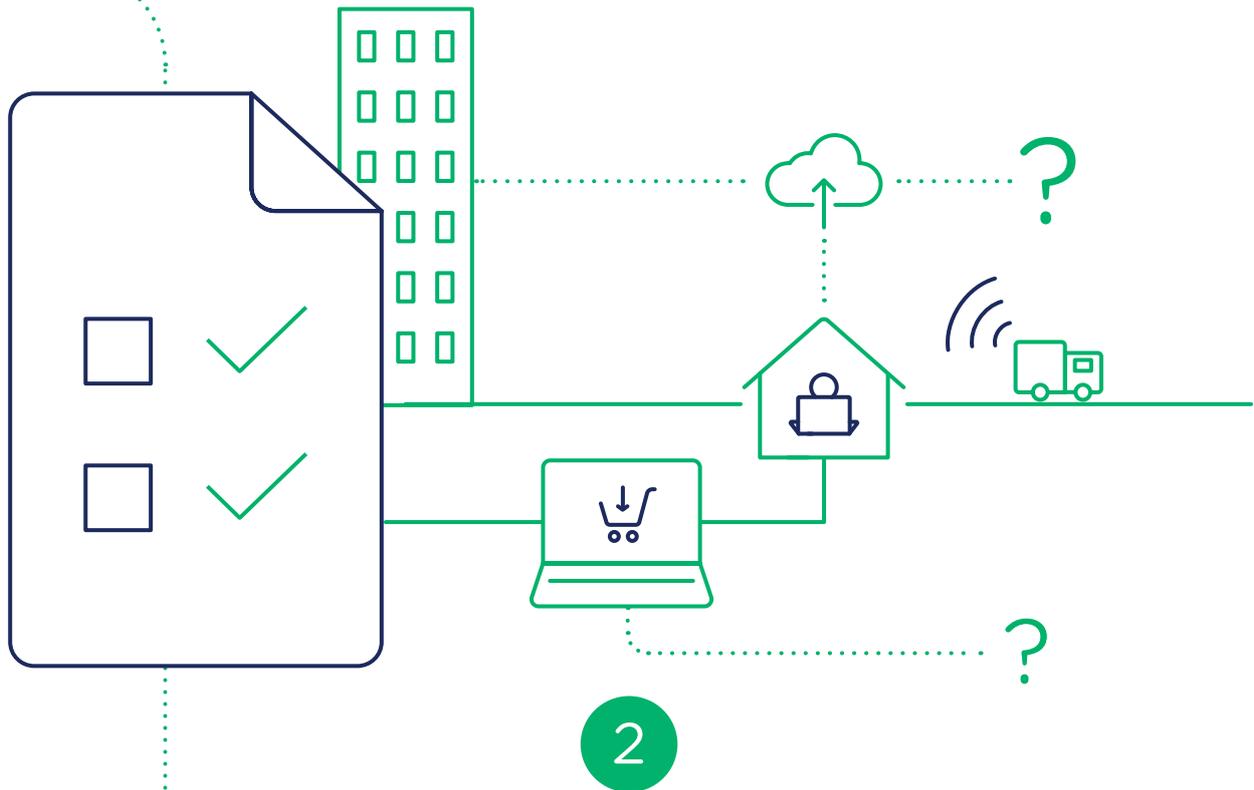
### Key questions to ask

- What should the digital strategy achieve for the business?
- What specific business goals does it help deliver?
- How does it align to the overall business strategy?

## “

**Having a digital strategy is a more comprehensive approach to technology adoption. When we look at changing business models and changing the way products are sourced, produced and delivered to customers, then that's what we mean when we talk about a digital strategy.”<sup>1</sup>**

**Foad Fadaghi**, Managing Director & Principal Analyst, Telsyte



## Assess your current state



### Key takeaway:

Taking time to evaluate the technology and skills already in place, including the network and any systems that are siloed within different departments, is a vital first step.

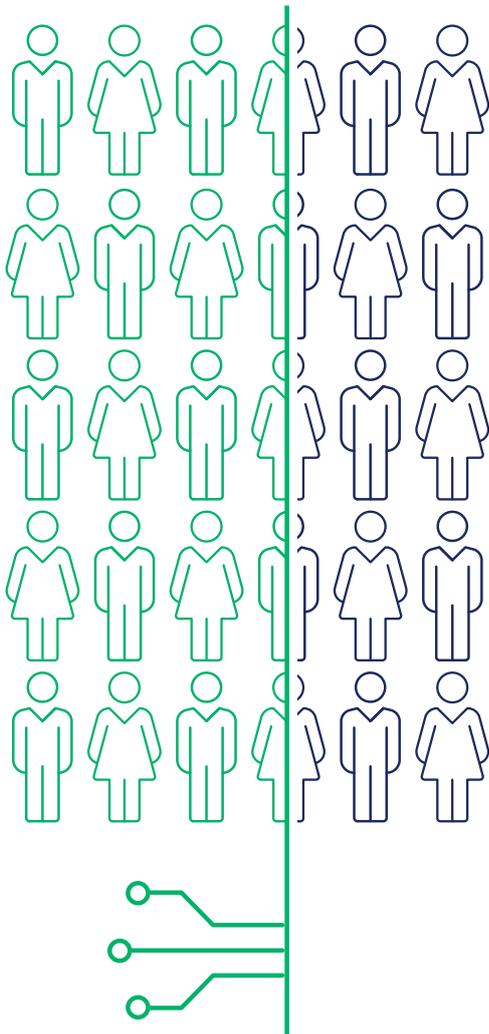
Many small businesses are time poor and taking time out to assess and plan can be difficult. But it is a vital step in developing a digital strategy.

For example, it can be easy for small businesses to add apps to solve specific business problems. During the pandemic, “what we saw on the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network was a doubling in the use of business applications”, **nbn** Executive General Manager Business Brendan Donohoe says.

But keeping track of applications across a business can be difficult. Apps may be siloed in one part of the business and there may be duplication of functions.

A good assessment of current state will identify the total cost of multiple app and service subscriptions, evaluate how well they serve business goals, and even whether they are still being used.

Businesses should also assess the infrastructure their apps and services run on.



# 57%

**More than half** of SMEs' workforces are digital natives<sup>2</sup>

The Telsyte study found that 76 per cent of SMEs with high-connectivity requirements have already invested in technologies. Businesses should assess where their technology has these requirements and if they are being held back by internet services that are not business-grade. business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> offers service providers wholesale network features that can help support high connectivity technologies, and provide flexibility and scalability for future growth in data usage by businesses.\*\*

As well as examining technology, a thorough assessment of a business' current state should also include the skills of its workers. Many businesses may find that they already employ 'digital natives' whose skills are underused, while others may find the need to provide training or hire workers.

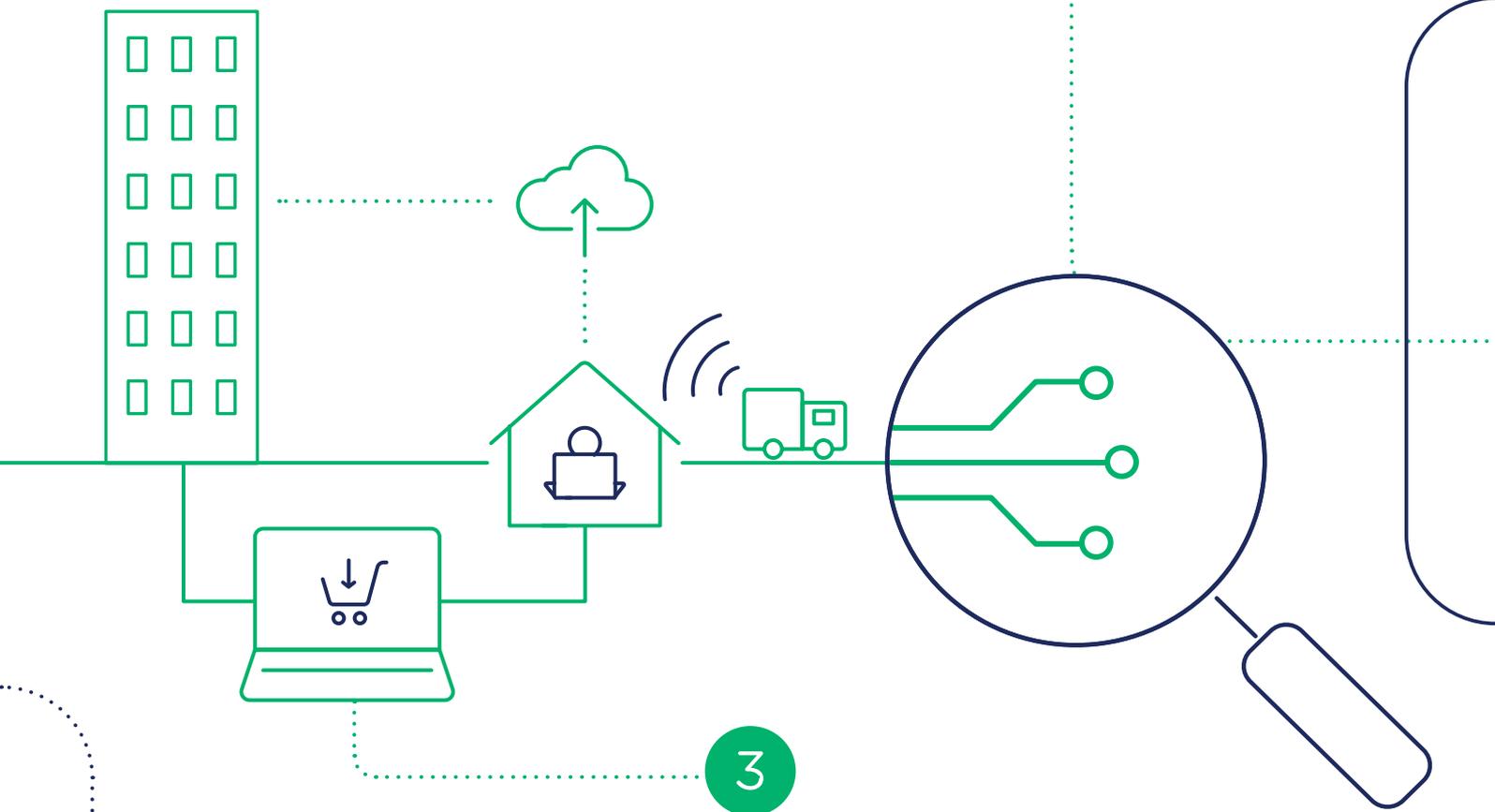


### Key questions to ask

- What technology is currently in place? What does it cost?
- Are any systems siloed within the business?
- Is the network causing data bottlenecks?
- What digital skills are available within the business?

**“ A digital plan has to be entrenched in every aspect of your business. It's not just the infrastructure and technology, or your website or your digital presence for marketing. Small businesses need to think about the digitisation of their workforce.”**

**Alexi Boyd,**  
CEO Council of Small Business Organisations Australia



3

## Identify opportunities

With a clear idea of their current state and business goals, SMEs can assess the opportunities for their digital strategy to keep their businesses moving forward.

According to Telsyte's study<sup>2</sup>, SMEs see a number of broad benefits from increased digital capability, including increased capability for employees, better cyber security, more agility and a better ability to manage disruptions.

These broad benefits are increasingly being delivered by cloud-based applications and services. Telsyte reports two thirds of SMEs are already using some form of cloud service<sup>2</sup>.

Increasingly, companies will need to consider how the various cloud-based systems they have put in place, such as video conferencing, storage or customer resource management, can share data and be managed centrally.



### Key takeaway:

Modern infrastructure such as cloud services can enable companies to move past legacy systems and deliver quick wins.

### Top SME tech investment priorities<sup>2\*</sup>



# 53%

Workplace modernisation



# 47%

Business intelligence



# 47%

Data management



# 47%

Employee devices

\*Proportion of Australian SMEs that plan to invest in this technology type

“There is a really good chance now for SMBs who may not have invested much, strategically, in IT to leapfrog a lot of the legacy IT that is no longer needed and end up in this world that is so much simpler, cleaner and more agile. There are so many real benefits that are available.”

**Jon Evans**  
CEO Enablis

Using [software defined wide area networks \(SD-WAN\)](#) to manage network traffic has also emerged as an opportunity to simplify network management and reduce costs.

With potential advantages including increased agility and ability to scale, cloud-based services can help businesses develop new services and adapt to change quickly. They have also increased the importance of the role of the network in companies' IT infrastructure.

As demands on their network increase, businesses that have relied on internet plans designed for home use may find that they are no longer suitable. But service providers can access wholesale business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> products that may include optional features and the network capability designed specifically for the needs of modern businesses.



### Key questions to ask

- What are the applications and services that deliver my business goals?
- Is my infrastructure ready for future needs?
- Is our network fit for purpose as the foundation of the digital strategy?
- Which network features are needed to enable the business to adapt to increased data usage and demands?

## 4

## Seek expert advice

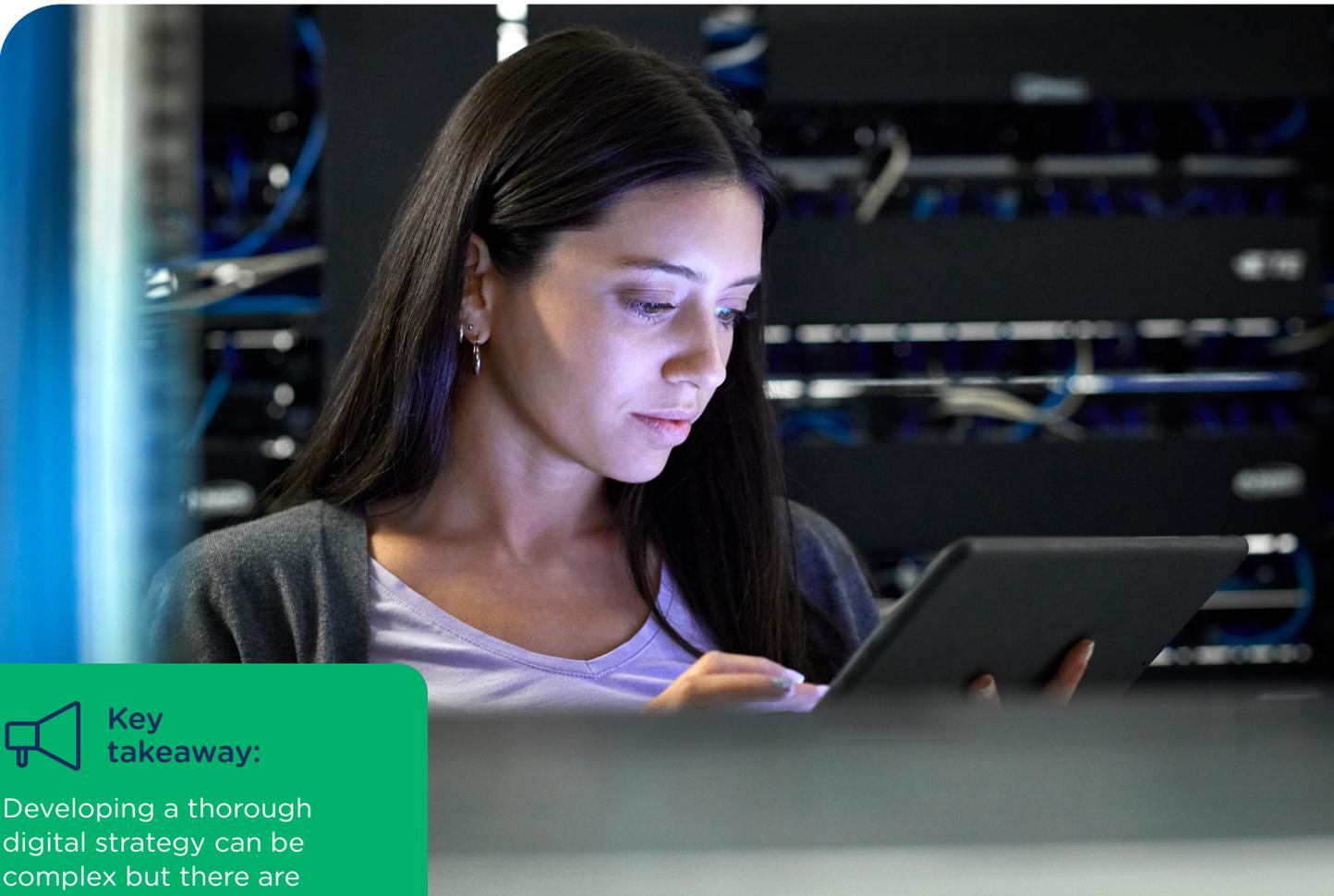
Many SMEs do not have the dedicated, in-house technology resources that larger enterprises often have. Some use specialist IT advisers to help develop their digital strategies, but there are other sources of advice too.

Industry groups and professional associations can be an excellent source of advice, with experienced industry people that can help mentor and guide companies through their digital transformation plans.

Finding the right advice<sup>2</sup>

# 42%

of SMEs with 50-199 employees receive knowledge from ICT service providers<sup>2</sup>.



### Key takeaway:

Developing a thorough digital strategy can be complex but there are plenty of sources of good advice for SMEs

For expertise around network solutions to help create a robust and reliable foundation, service providers have access to a range of wholesale features they can use to create customised plans to meet the needs of SMEs. Service providers and business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> ICT accredited advisers<sup>\*\*\*</sup> can help assess the most appropriate combination of features, working closely with businesses to select network plans best suited to their specific needs.

“

**Looking at what others are doing and enlisting the help of experts can be very useful.”**

**Brendan Donohoe**

Executive General Manager Business, **nbn**



### Key questions to ask

- For the opportunities identified, where are the knowledge gaps within the business?
- Can current IT service providers provide the knowledge and advice needed?
- Are there areas where advice and help is needed from new IT service providers?
- Which network features are important to support the digital strategy?

## 5

### Choose projects and get started



#### Key takeaway:

When it comes to technology investment and adoption, not moving can be the same as going backwards.

Once you have identified opportunities to deploy new technologies within your business, select a handful of key projects and get started. Choose projects that can make the largest impact in the shortest time, to help give the digital strategy momentum and gain internal support.

Because technology moves so quickly, projects that take too long to plan and deliver may not deliver all the benefits they were expected to, or may tie companies to solutions that are outdated.



A great place to start is with your network. No matter what applications and services you have identified as priorities, a reliable network foundation will be an important piece of the technology puzzle for your business to help improve productivity gains and help realise a faster return on your technology investments.

The **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network serves as a digital backbone that provides access to services that can support SMEs as they roll out their digital strategies to meet current needs and take advantage of future opportunities.<sup>†</sup>



### Key questions to ask

- What projects will have the maximum impact in the shortest timeframe?
- What applications are critical to the digital strategy?
- Is the network fit-for-purpose for the digital strategy?

“The starting point for me would be to get a really clear view of what technology and applications and digitisation can do to advance your business. You should find some obvious step-change gains that can be made from one, two or three application changes or transformation changes.”

**Jon Evans**  
CEO Enablis

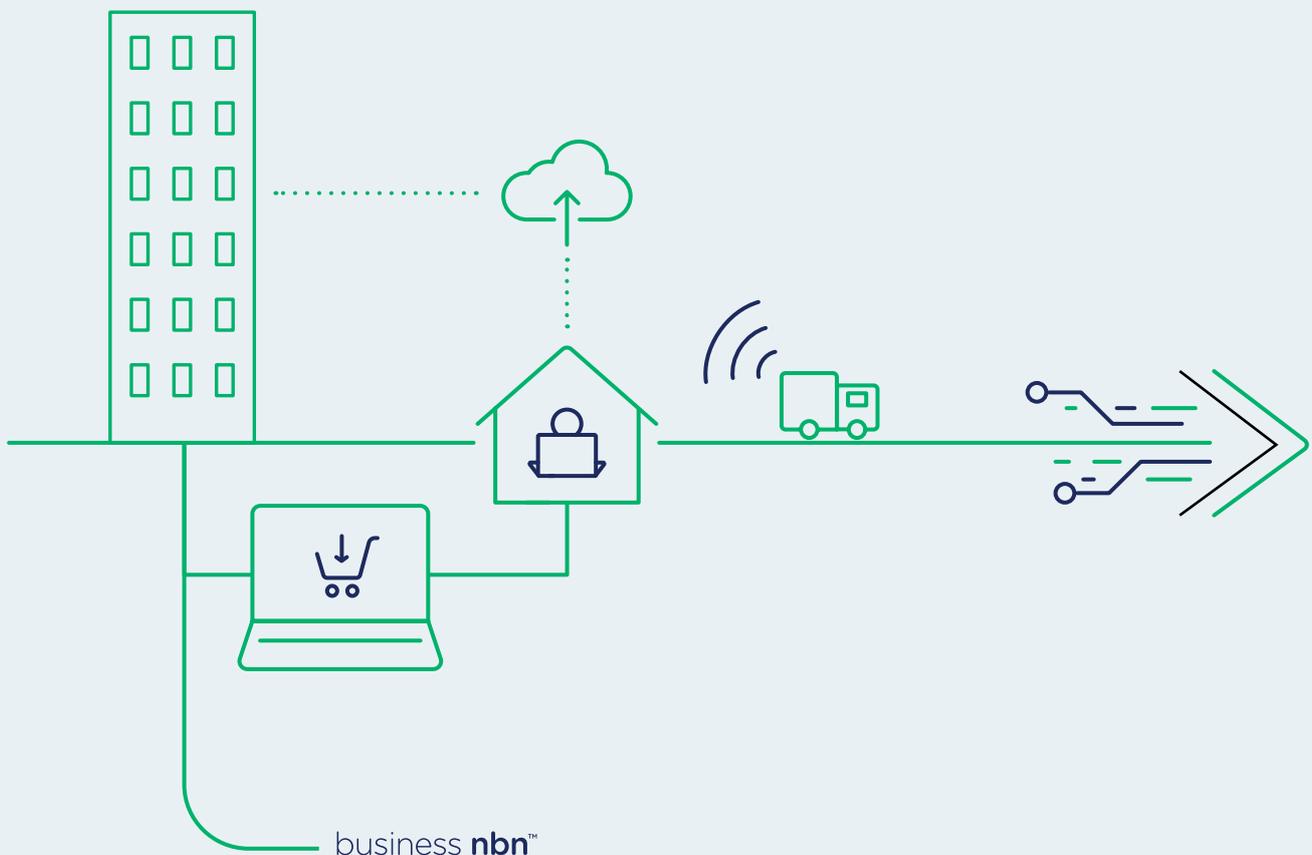
# Be ready for the future

The COVID-19 pandemic helped accelerate the efforts of SMEs to digitally transform their businesses. With many new high connectivity technologies such as video conferencing and cloud services now deployed, fewer than half of businesses have made these investments with a digital strategy in place.

Developing a digital strategy will assist in identifying opportunities to further invest in key applications and services that can help make your business more agile, resilient, and ready for new opportunities.

It will also help them see where they can potentially gain an advantage over competitors.

business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> wholesale services can help provide a solid digital foundation for an evolving digital strategy, with a range of business-grade wholesale features that service providers can use to help support business growth now and into the future.



“

**Convince those that aren't convinced that standing still is actually sending them backwards. Show them that there is a much better world, and if they don't move, that is the threat to them. Not doing something is the threat.”**

**Brendan Donohoe**

Executive General Manager Business, nbn

A robust and reliable network solution to support high-connectivity technologies, with flexible wholesale features such as those offered by business nbn™ to service providers, is a key component in helping enable the opportunities of digital strategy. When choosing a plan powered by business nbn™ from a service provider, consider choosing a solution from service providers to meet your business needs.<sup>†\*\*</sup>

**Upload speeds:** Efficient business connectivity needs high upload speeds that can help support data transmission for cloud-based computing and video conferencing.

**Symmetrical speeds:** For businesses needing symmetrical download and upload speeds to meet their connectivity and data requirements, there are various plans available, including those offered with business nbn™ Enterprise Ethernet\*.

**Prioritised data:** After identifying and classifying the various data types in the business, a service provider can prioritise certain data applications – such as those that are mission-critical – to help enable connectivity and help reduce disruptions or opportunities for slow speeds.

**Enhanced Service Level Agreements (eSLAs) ††:** Downtime can be damaging for business productivity and reputation. business nbn™ offers retail service providers business-grade support including a dedicated operations centre for providers, migration support and shorter target network rectification times compared to home nbn™ plans.

# Discover how business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> can help support your digital strategy



## Sources

1. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u5naGdu1I-U&t=416s>
2. <https://www.nbnco.com.au/content/dam/nbn/images/blog/telsyte-australian-digital-workplace-study-2021-for-nbn-co.pdf>

## Disclaimers:

- § The views expressed by Jon Evans, Alexi Boyd, Foad Fadaghi and Brendan Donohoe in the webinar and this whitepaper are general in nature and are not intended to constitute advice for your particular circumstances. You should make your own enquiries as to what technology and connectivity options are best for your business.
- ‡ Your experience, including the speeds actually achieved over the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network, depends on the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> access network technology and configuration over which services are delivered to your premises, whether you are using the internet during the busy period, and some factors outside **nbn**'s control (like your equipment quality, software, broadband plan, signal reception and how your service provider designs its network). For business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> Enterprise Ethernet, if your service provider has not selected the 'Class of Service - High', the speeds you experience may be affected by contention on the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network, particularly in busy periods. Satellite end customers may also experience latency.
- ‡‡ **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network availability may be impacted by factors outside of the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network. Not all your faults with a retail service will relate to a fault with the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> network. Faults may relate to matters in a provider's network, the end customer's premises equipment or network resources being accessed.
- \* business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> Enterprise Ethernet is only available in the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> Fixed Line network footprint and at limited premises served by the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> Fixed Wireless and Satellite networks. Costs may apply; customers should contact their preferred service provider to ask about availability and any fees and charges that may be applicable.
- \*\* business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> is not available on the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> fixed wireless network. These wholesale service features are offered to service providers. Not all providers offer plans based on the full range of wholesale business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> products, product features and services. Availability of wholesale business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> products, product features and services depends on an end customer's access technology and area. The service options providers make available to their end customers depend on what they have productised and the retail solutions they offer.
- \*\*\* business **nbn**<sup>™</sup> accredited advisers have undertaken a short course on the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> broadband access network. **nbn** does not sponsor, endorse or guarantee any advice given or representations made (including any recommendations to purchase goods and services or purchase telecommunication services over the **nbn**<sup>™</sup> access network from a phone or internet service provider) and does not guarantee the accuracy of that advice or representation.